

Preparing for College: Senior Checklist

August/September

- Register for the SAT and/or ACT if you didn't take it as a junior, or if you aren't satisfied with your score and want to take it again. (remember that your counselor can help you with fee waivers)
- Take a look at some college applications and consider all of the different pieces of information you will need to compile.
- The SAT test date most popular with high school seniors is this month.
- Visit with your school counselor to make sure you are on track to graduate and fulfill college admission requirements. If you're ahead of schedule, consider taking courses at a local university or community college to get a jumpstart on college credit.
- Take every opportunity to get to know colleges: meeting with college representatives who visit your high schools during the fall, attending local college fairs, visiting campuses (if possible). Ask your counselor if they know of special campus visitation programs.
- Narrow down your list of colleges and begin to consider "safe," "reach," and "realistic" schools. Make sure you have the application and financial aid information for each school. Find out if you qualify for any scholarships at these schools.

Create a checklist and calendar to chart:

Standardized test dates, registration deadlines, and fees

College application due dates

Financial aid application forms and deadlines

Other materials you'll need for college applications (recommendations, transcripts, essays, etc.)

Your high school's application processing deadlines

Some schools require the CSS/Financial Aid Profile. Ask the colleges to which you are applying for their deadlines. You can register as early as September. See your guidance counselor about fee waivers.

October

- The FAFSA (Free Application for Federal Student Aid) will be available this month, you can begin completing as of October 1st. This is the form you will complete to find out what financial aid you are eligible to receive from the government. Ask your guidance office for a copy or visit www.fafsa.ed.gov this form should be filed online if at all possible.
- Some colleges will have deadlines as early as this month. These would include rolling admission, priority, early decision, and early action deadlines. Submit Early Decision Applications by **October 1st**.
- Finalize your college essay. Many schools will require that you submit at least one essay with your application.
- Request personal recommendations from teachers, school counselors, or employers. Follow the process required by your high school or provide a stamped, addressed envelope, the appropriate college forms, and an outline of your academic record and extracurricular activities to each person writing you a recommendation.
- Research possibilities of scholarships. Ask your counselor, your colleges, and your religious and civic groups about scholarship opportunities. You should *never* pay for scholarship information.

November

- Register for your Spring Semester courses.
- Finalize and send any early decision or early action applications due this month. Have a parent, teacher, counselor, or other adult review the application before it is submitted.
- Every college will require a copy of your transcript from your high school. Follow your school's procedure for sending transcripts.

- Make sure testing companies have sent your scores directly to the colleges to which you are applying.
- Complete all ApplyTexas Applications due December 1st.

December

- Begin to organize regular decision applications and financial aid forms, which will be due in January and/or February.
- Send out any additional documents your applications may be pending such as resume, transcript, letters of recommendation, etc.

January

- Many popular and selective colleges will have application deadlines as early as January 1. Others have deadlines later in January and February. Keep track of and observe deadlines for sending in all required fees and paperwork.
- Ask your counselor in January to send first semester transcripts to schools where you applied (if applicable). At the end of the school year, they will need to send final transcripts to the college you will attend.
- If you haven't already done so, submit FAFSA no later than **March 15**. The sooner you complete it, the sooner you will have an idea of your financial aid options. Watch the mail for your Student Aid Report (SAR)—it should arrive four weeks after the FAFSA is filed.

Feb/March/April

- While most of your applications will be complete and you are waiting to receive admission decisions, don't slack in the classroom. The college that you do attend will want to see your second semester transcript. No Senioritis!
- Acceptance letters and financial aid offers will start to arrive. Review your acceptances, compare financial aid packages, and visit your final choices, especially if you haven't already.
- Once you have made your decision, look into housing arrangements at your school of choice. Compare on campus- off campus cost and research their availability.
- Submit any scholarship offers to your counselor for scholarship night.

May

- May 1 is the date when the college you plan to attend requires a commitment and deposit. When you've made your college decision, notify your counselor and the colleges. Send in your deposit by the postmark date of May 1. If you've been offered financial aid, accept the offer and follow the instructions given. Also notify schools you will not attend of your decision.
- Make sure that you have requested that your final transcript be sent to the school you will be attending.
- If you are "wait listed" by a college you really want to attend, visit, call and write the admission office to make your interest clear. Ask how you can strengthen your application.
- Complete any graduation requirements, such as community service hours, etc.

Summer before entering college

- Enroll as early as possible.
- Attend a summer orientation program.
- Make a list of what you will need to take to college (coordinate with your roommate so you won't have two of everything). Carpet? Refrigerator? Microwave? Stereo? Computer? Etc.
- Work with your parents on a financial plan or budget. Where will your money come from? Who pays for what? How/When to ask for more? What constitutes an emergency? Consider a credit card really, just for emergencies.
- Make a list of personal care items you use and go price shopping: You won't believe how much a toothbrush costs!
- Start planning for how you'll communicate with your parents and friends while you're at college –e-mail, cell phone, IM, etc. Consider cost, availability and ease of communication. Ensure clear and easy communication with your folks and see if they'll pay for part or all of that. You should probably pay for the rest.
- Make sure to take a tour of your classes before school starts so you won't get lost or look foolish on the first day of class.